Name _____ Date _____

Adapted from: http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/xmas/trees.html

Christmas Trees

Many households in Britain will have a tree of some sort. Decorating the tree is often a family occasion where everyone helps out. As Christmas approaches, presents are arranged under the tree.

The traditional Christmas tree is a fir tree but, these days, many people buy artificial trees to try to help the environment.

Christmas trees became popular in England in 1841 when Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, brought a Christmas tree over from Germany and put it in Windsor Castle. The royal couple and their children were photographed standing around the Christmas tree and the tradition of decorating a tree became fashionable.

Decorations

During Victorian times, Christmas trees were decorated with candles to remind children of the stars in the sky when Jesus was born. Candles were, obviously, a fire hazard and nowadays we have replaced them with electric lights.

Christmas trees were also decorated with sweets and cakes hung with ribbon. In 1880, Woolworths first sold manufactured Christmas tree ornaments, which proved to be very popular.

Today, we decorate Christmas trees with tinsel, lights and small ornaments, which hang from the branches. Chocolate coins or shapes are also hung on the tree and the presents are put underneath.

An angel or star is put on the top of the Christmas tree. The angel represents the angel Gabriel who visited the shepherds in the field and the star represents the star that the shepherds followed to the stable where Jesus was born.

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Why do we decorate Christmas trees?

A long time ago, people used to decorate the trees outside every winter because they believed that spirits lived in the trees. When the trees lost their leaves, people thought that it meant that the spirits had abandoned them and this made them worried because they believed that, without the spirits, the trees would not grow leaves ever again.

To encourage the tree spirits to return, people dressed the trees with strips of coloured cloth. The people hoped that by making the trees look beautiful, the spirits would return to live in the trees again in time for spring. It seemed to work and the trees grew leaves again every spring.

When the custom of bringing small fir trees indoors started in Germany, it seemed natural to add similar decorations to them even though fir trees do not lose their leaves. Over time people added different decorations and hung things such as beads, apples, gingerbread and sweets from the branches.

The most famous Christmas tree in Britain

Near Nelson's Column, in London's Trafalgar Square, a giant 70ft Christmas tree is set up and decorated in a ceremony each year. The tree is a thank you gift from the people of Olso, Norway. During the Second World War, King Haakon of Norway was forced into exile in England when the Germans invaded his country. Since 1947, Norway has expressed its thanks for Britain's help by sending a huge Norwegian spruce every year to be shared by all.

Recycling Christmas trees

Real Christmas trees are biodegradable and you can use the trunk and branches in your garden to protect the roots of plants and to stop weeds from growing. The trunk and branches then decompose and create compost that contains nutrients to help other plants grow.

History of Christmas Trees E3-L1

Name _____ Date _____

Adapted from: http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/xmas/trees.html

Questions

1. What kind of tree was traditionally used for a Christmas tree?

2. Why do most people buy artificial trees nowadays?

3. In which year did Christmas trees become popular in England?

4. Where did Prince Albert's Christmas tree come from?

5. Why were Christmas trees decorated with candles?

6. Who sold the first manufactured Christmas tree ornaments and when?

7. What does the star on the top of a Christmas tree represent?

8. Why did people to decorate the trees outside?

9. How tall is the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square?

10. Which country gives London a tree and why do they do it?

History of Christmas Trees E3-L1

Name _____ Date _____

Writing Exercise

Describe your ideal Christmas tree.

Think about the following points:

- Do you prefer a real or artificial tree?
- What size?
- What sort of decorations do you like? Tinsel, baubles, bows, etc.
- Which colours do you think look best on a Christmas tree?
- Do you put a star or an angel on the top?

Plan (5 minutes maximum)

- ❖ Number your paragraphs.
- ❖ Have you covered all the bullet points?

History of Christmas Trees E3-L1

Name _____ Date _____

Rough draft (10 minutes maximum)

- Just include a very rough layout and the key phrases you want to use.

- Check important spellings in the dictionary and note them here.

Name _____ Date _____

Final version (10 minutes)

- Write your finished description below or on a separate sheet of paper.